

NADJA GERNALZICK
HEIKE C. SPICKERMANN (Eds.)

Developing Transnational American Studies

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Developing Transnational American Studies

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NADJA GERNALZICK

HEIKE C. SPICKERMANN

For ALFRED HORNUNG

on his seventieth birthday

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*It's important for us to pause for a moment
and make sure that we are talking with each other
in a way that heals, not a way that wounds.*

Barack Obama

Dilek Dizdar, Anton Escher, and Dieter Lamping

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Nadja Gernalzick and Heike C. Spickermann

In a world determined by global environmental phenomena and economic networks as well as by political interests and movements of continental or planetary scale, affecting the lives of people everywhere, Transnational American Studies have been developed by international and internationally minded scholars to address the need for knowledge and awareness across borders and across the limits of national politics and institutions. In a decisive change from the comparativist pattern of investigation between two or more assumed units, the transnational approach intends a further integration of cultural systems.

In response to the end of the Cold War and the fast pace of globalization since the 1990s as well as to a vision and critique of transatlanticism, transnationality and transnationalization have gained increased attention as topics within American Studies, propelled significantly by the discussion on transnational attentiveness rather than isolationist thinking after 9/11. Drawing on the paradigm shift produced by the work in Postcolonial Studies after World War II alongside that of decolonization, and marking the modifications made to the world system after the end of the Cold War, Transnational American Studies address hybridities, borderlands, contact zones and planetary thinking in ways that negotiate the change from a nineteenth-century, national-philological or regional-studies approach to a future of Transnational Studies in the United States, Transnational Studies in France, Transnational Studies in India, Transnational Studies in Polynesia, or Transnational Studies in China. Like the fluidities, relations, and processes considered to determine its agenda, Transnational American Studies itself is an evolving field, mobilized by its seemingly oxymoronic name. Conceptualizations of transition, for example by address to relationality as developed in Caribbean Studies or to world literature, are in dialogue with the vocabularies of transnationality. Transnational American Studies develop as much by creating agencies as by responding to determining forces.

In her 2004 Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, Shelley Fisher Fishkin influentially summarized and reviewed the agenda for the disciplinary emergence of Transnational American Studies. Alfred Hornung, together with colleagues from Europe and the United States, since its inception has supported the initiative by the American Studies Association to “extend[...] American Studies activities to the whole world, while, at the same time, inviting Americanists from all over to share in a transnational academic enterprise, seeing non-American colleagues as equal partners in the common research project” (Hornung 2011). With the exact intention of opening nationally bound perspectives, *The Journal of Transnational American Studies* was founded in 2008. Discussions of cosmopolitanism and its political and academic traditions in diverse languages, of citizenship and planetarity, of cultural and economic hegemony, of distribution of wealth worldwide and of the future role of comparative literature as well as of studies of world literature all were and are integral to the work undertaken in Transnational American Studies. With their transnational turn, the focus of American Studies has become resituated in increasingly international, global constellations of knowledge production and

cultural transfer as well as in multi- and transnational discourses. With their productive, cooperative, and conciliatory program, transnational studies invite and require support.

This volume combines Transnational American Studies from diverse angles in the four general areas “Repositioning the American South”, “Life, Literature, Ecocriticism”, “Life Writing and Medicine” and “Critical Studies of the Nation”. Written by American Studies and Comparative Literature scholars, the contributions are not restricted to American Studies as a nationally bound field, but extend and pertain to transnational and global discourses. Such topics as cross-border cultural movements, interdisciplinarity, the critical study of racism in popular culture, or the international reception and translation of literature and film indicate transnational interests. Transnational studies also involve historiography and the critical discussion of theories of nation states since their inception.

With renowned expertise on the life and works of Mark Twain, SHELLEY FISHER FISHKIN continues to pertinently reveal the international impact of Twain’s writings in past and contemporary literary life, by way of their reception, translation, and worldwide distribution. Twain spent a third of his life outside the United States and held a transnational, almost universal perspective on the world. A unique phenomenon, despite attending difficulties of translation, his humorous writings gained success worldwide and in many different languages. Fishkin follows Twain between the United States and the regions and continents he visited during his travels. In detail, she addresses Twain’s remarkable knowledge of languages other than English, his sparkling play with words, and humorous reflections on linguistic specificity with respect to *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884–1885), to demonstrate that in his time Twain could hardly find an equal within the realm of transnationality.

As scholar of American Studies and acclaimed singer-songwriter, MANFRED SIEBALD selects a theme related to literature, music and history. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein’s musical *Oklahoma!* was first performed in 1943 at the St. James Theatre on Broadway in New York. Siebald analyzes the success of the musical and how its creators transformed its source, the theatrical play *Green Grow the Lilacs* by Lynn Riggs (1931). The adaptation across media into the plurimediality of the musical effects an increase of antagonism of cultures depicted. Stylistics of songs in the play are compared to the musical and explicated with regard to the expectations of the receiving public. The characters and their constellation as well as distinctions between settlement, unsettled existence, landownership, and nation building reveal unresolved questions in U.S. American history and its communities.

CHARLES R. WILSON chooses the autobiography of Katharine Du Pre Lumpkin, *The Making of a Southerner* (1947), to describe the former Southern culture through the eyes of Lumpkin as first an ingenuous child and then eventually as a more and more critical activist. In detail, the passages regarding her Southern family background and its involvement in what are considered race relations illustrate the cultural constitution of the ‘Southern way of life’ as well as the cultural construction of race, which is increasingly challenged by the life-writing author’s personal experience and thought. In discussing *The Making of a Southerner* from a transnational perspective, Wilson treats one of the most harrowing aspects of U.S. American history in a way that critically invokes how structures and elements like those employed in Southern raciology of the United States continue to find resurgence in countries across the globe.

ZHANG LONGXI, addressing world literature, treats the lives and works of two autobiographers, Tao Qian (365–427) from China and Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) from the United States, in respect of their common relation to both nature and solitude. He investigates how proximity to the natural environment can be sensed through the works of the authors across medial, temporal, and cultural differences, and shows how their writing links the experience of nature to a spiritual aspect. The authors lived at different times and places as well as in different cultures and nations that, in many respects, even appear oppositional. However, by addressing aesthetics and human faculties of perception, Zhang uncovers connections of a shared concept of nature and its transfer through and across languages. Including further authors of world literature like Michel de Montaigne and Rainer Maria Rilke, he shows that the experience of nature can only be transferred through an art of suggestion by which the authors render imagination that is beyond descriptive language and invite the readers' cocreation of imaginative spaces beyond limitations of culture.

NADJA GERNALZICK shows how the relational discourse supporting transnationality is figured also in the text, translation, and reception of Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *La Relación* (1542). She reads the incommensurabilities in the semiotization of first contact in the colonial travel narrative that is chronologically pre-nationalist and proto-humanist as examples of posthumanism. The negotiation of group association and human communality by the reader, which the narrator of the sixteenth century challenges and provides an opportunity for, becomes an exercise not only in transnationality but also in transtemporality.

Before an extensive background in research on sustainability in the sciences and the arts, HUBERT ZAPF discusses sustainability in and by literature, including the investigation of dynamic ambiguities resulting from the imaginative connection of past and future. Literature becomes a transhistorical medium of sustainability for the cultural ecosystem as well as for cultural evolution from a perspective that ranges across the disciplinary and institutional divide between the life sciences and the humanities.

RÜDIGER KUNOW investigates the storylines of narratives of persons with Alzheimer's disease, in order to address questions how living without memory and writing across semantic gaps may be adequately analyzed. He interprets Alzheimer's as a "figure of interruption" and shows its impact in analyses of narratives in blog entries and autobiographical projects as well as in biographical life writing about Alzheimer patients by their close relatives, such as Jonathan Franzen's memoir "My Father's Brain: What Alzheimer's Takes Away" (2001).

Through the autobiography of Elizabeth Blackwell (1821–1910), CARMEN BIRKLE inquires into the circumstances of becoming a female doctor in the nineteenth century. In detail, she investigates the obstacles and contingencies of a gendered education system for physicians. Birkle reveals what was specially demanded of female health practitioners who wanted to acquire a doctorate so as to officially practice as medical professionals and also demonstrates the difficulties for female patients in receiving adequate treatment, for historically it had been the professional midwife only who was permitted to follow a vocation in medicine as a woman. The investigation provides insights into the restrictions on female efforts to become academics, and it links to the history of women's rights in the United States and Europe while explaining the historical developments specifically in

respect of the medical discipline and its paradoxical (un)concern for the materiality of bodies.

Discussing surveillance practices, BIRGIT DÄWES enters a contemporary discussion on the relation of mediality and everyday experience of observation practices by means of contemporary U.S. American TV series and adaptations. She critically shows the problematics of how a series like *Homeland* (2011), adapted from an Israeli series, operates through technologies that transgress national borders as well as through transnational patterns of relationship. The contribution is grounded in early theoretical models of surveillance, such as the panopticon as prison architecture by Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century, later taken up by Michel Foucault for development of critiques of governance and governability in modernity that have become influential worldwide.

NICOLE WALLER reveals linkages between the local and the national in a discussion of Spike Lee's documentary film *When the Levees Broke* (2006) that examines the situation in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina, one of the deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States. She inquires into the relation of regional and federal liability in case of administrative failure of compliance and thereby tests the limits of institutional entities, with particular regard to raciological delineations and their racist entrenchments. Her considerably textured critical discussion pertains to global humanism in the circumscriptions of the nation state.

MITA BANERJEE discusses Barack Obama's auto/biography *Dreams from My Father* (1995) as a "kaleidoscope of difference" beyond stereotyping. She shows how the narrator tells stories of and with different people from his environment, individually acknowledging each person's situation. By Obama's example, Banerjee explicates that differences do not have to be treated as restrictive opposites, but rather that there is a possibility of differentiation of differences, up to the magnitude of the metaphor of the "kaleidoscopic". At the same time, Mita Banerjee's writing is a tribute to Alfred Hornung's latest efforts in co-founding the Institute für Transnational American Studies at Johannes-Gutenberg University Mainz. The initiators of the founding of the research institute had envisioned it to be named in honor of Barack Obama, former president of the United States, which was accomplished in 2017.

This collection was initiated by the Center for Intercultural Studies at the Johannes-Gutenberg University Mainz on the occasion of Alfred Hornung's seventieth birthday. The contributions to *Developing Transnational American Studies* are by authors from different generations who are international colleagues as well as former students of Alfred Hornung. Transnational thinking is continued and shared in their articles across a variety of critical approaches. The transnational turn of American Studies methodologically addresses a concern for humanity beyond nationalism and racism and is diversely marked in Alfred Hornung's research and fields of specialization, in particular in his work on life writing and auto/biography.

Alfred Hornung joined the faculty of Johannes-Gutenberg University as Professor of English and American Studies in 1988 and directed the transdisciplinary Center for Intercultural Studies at Johannes-Gutenberg University from 2000 to 2005. He was appointed Honorary Director of the Center in 2010. Founded in 1997, the Center for Intercultural Studies (Zentrum für Interkulturelle Studien, ZIS) aims at generating interdisciplinary

synergy between the diverse humanities and cultural-studies institutes at Johannes-Gutenberg University Mainz through initiating concerted research projects, lecture series and symposia which mediate between academic departments and disciplines. Under the direction of Alfred Hornung, the Center for Intercultural Studies through a variety of programs and funding developed into a vital basis for international cooperation, inviting and involving scholars and guest lecturers either from or having migrated to the United States, China, Canada, the Caribbean, Australia, North Africa and Europe. Alfred Hornung's long-time commitment to the ZIS indicates his professional goals as an American Studies scholar who actively and passionately participates in the multiple efforts to create a transnational network of intercultural relations and to pursue research on transnational and cross-cultural history and change.

Alfred Hornung's service on behalf of the Center for Intercultural Studies is one of his many contributions to the advancement of transnationality and American Studies worldwide. For many years and through his prolific creativity as a scholar, he has promoted American Studies as a principally comparativist field in the academic community, with publications in all areas of life writing and ecocriticism as well as regarding the fields of modernism, postmodernism, and intercultural studies. Over the years he has cooperated with colleagues, institutions, and organizations in Europe, the Americas, Africa, Australia, and China. With colleagues at Johannes-Gutenberg University Mainz, he co-founded the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies that was inaugurated in early 2017 and where he currently works as a Research Professor and serves as the Speaker. The Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies at Mainz University was established as a forum of exchange with international partner universities. Before the foundation of the Obama Institute, Alfred Hornung was longtime Chair of the then Institute for American Studies at Mainz University.

Next to his functions at Johannes-Gutenberg University on behalf of transnational American Studies, Alfred Hornung held a number of important positions nationally and internationally. He was President of The Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Studies: Europe and the Americas (MESEA) from 2000 to 2004 and President of the German Association for American Studies from 2000 to 2005. He has been Member at Large of the Executive Committee of the International American Studies Association (IASA) since 2003 and was a Member of the International Committee of the American Studies Association (ASA) from 2004 to 2008. From 2008 to 2016 he was Elected Member of the Review Board of the German Research Foundation (DFG) for European and North American Literatures. He is a Founding Member of the International Auto/Biography Association (IABA) and of IABA-Europe. In 2009 he became Founding Member and Vice President of the World Ecological Organization (WEO), Beijing. He was Chair of the National Review Board of the German Council of Science and Humanities for the Evaluation of English and American Studies at German Universities from 2009 to 2012, and since 2012 has participated on the Scientific Advisory Board of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute in Vienna, Austria.

His activities in the service of transnational academic cooperation and diplomacy include various guest professorships and fellowships at European, American, Canadian and Chinese universities, among others at Harvard, Yale, the National Humanities Center in North Carolina, the Center for American Culture Studies at Columbia University in New

York, and the John D. Rockefeller Center in Bellagio, Italy. He is a Member of the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies at Beijing University. His commitment to transnational cooperation and understanding has been recognized and honored since the very start of his academic career when he was appointed Honorary Citizen of the State of Texas in 1979. For his endeavours towards transnationalizing science, he received a number of international awards, including the 2013 Carl Bode-Norman Holmes Pearson Award for Outstanding Contributions to American Studies by the American Studies Association, Washington. In 2014 he was elected a Member of Academia Europaea, and in 2017 a Member of the Advisory Board of the Institute of World Literature at Harvard University. In addition to his dedication to transnationalizing American Studies that has included a formidable amount of worldwide traveling, Alfred Hornung has contributed to and supported various scholarly journals. From 1991 to 2002 he was general editor of the journal *Amerikastudien/American Studies* and is an editor of the American Studies Monograph Series on behalf of the German Association for American Studies. He is also an editor of *The Journal of Transnational American Studies* and on the editorial board of several journals, including *Atlantic Studies*, *Contemporary Foreign Literature* (Nanjing), *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* and *The European Journal of Life Writing*. With the former and current directors of the Center for Intercultural Studies, he has co-edited the series Intercultural Studies on behalf of the Center since 2014.

Alfred Hornung's research and publications from the late 1970s until today attest to his commitment to political and social change against injustice and suffering through critique and mediation by academics and intellectuals across borders, such as his doctoral dissertation on the Muckraking Movement in the United States of the 1910s and his post-doctoral thesis on autobiography as transformative means of meeting challenges in cultural history of the United States from Puritanism to postmodernity. From an interest in relations between autobiography, democracy, and literary anthropology; their problematization by the avant-garde and by postmodern writers; comparative studies of ethics, aesthetics and moral codes in literature; and to extensive research and publication on postcolonialism, interculturality, multiculturalism, transculturality, globality and planetary, Alfred Hornung's academic work over four decades has continually expanded in scope from a transatlantic to a transoceanic worldview while remaining anchored in a concern for the changes in individual lives and experiences in specific times and places. His continuing critique of nationalisms and segregations eventually met with the emergence of Transnational American Studies. Phenomena of border crossing and transformation, developments in cultural studies and world politics as well as citizenship and rights discourses are topical in his lifelong contributions to American Studies from many places of the world, and, coherently, in the opening of American Studies, also in respect of academic disciplinary and institutional politics, towards Transnational American Studies.

Among Alfred Hornung's latest publications in American Studies that underline the transnational orientation of his research are "ChinAmerica: Global Affairs and Planetary Consciousness" in *American Studies as Transnational Practice: Turning Towards the Transpacific*, edited by Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease (2016); the Chinese translation under the title 生态学与生命写作 of the collection *Ecology and Life Writing* he co-edited with Zhao Baisheng, and its publication in Beijing (2016); and the collection *Obama and Transnational American Studies*, edited in 2016. Alfred Hornung's newest published

interventions in Transnational American Studies concern the further transnationalization of auto/biography studies: the biography *Jack London: Abenteuer des Lebens* (2016), the programmatic “Life Writing in and beyond the Anglophone World” (2017) and a tribute to eminent life-writing scholar Philippe Lejeune from France, “Le pacte Philippe” (2018).

We thank Alfred Hornung for his inspiration and example, the contributors for their critical writing and research, Beate Neumeier for her support in designing and coordinating the symposium *Transnational American Studies* at the Center for Intercultural Studies in 2016 and Anton Escher, Director of the Center since 2006, for his generous gesture of initiating and realizing the symposium in honor of Alfred Hornung. For proofreading and stylistic advice we thank Sabine Kim, Roberto Luis Ellis and Jamie Karnik, and for formatting and editorial support Camilla Blei and Teresa Cordero Villar.

Mainz, October 2018

Nadja Gernalzick and Heike C. Spickermann

REPOSITIONING THE AMERICAN SOUTH

Originally of Missouri, Now of the Universe¹

Mark Twain and the World

Shelley Fisher Fishkin

If we set out to look for an American author most likely to achieve a world readership, we would be hard-pressed to find a *less* promising candidate than Mark Twain at the start of his career. Twain's first national fame came with a sketch about a storyteller in a California mining camp and the uptight easterner whom this storyteller regaled with a tale about an inveterate gambler and all the animals he bet on ("The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" in TWAIN [1867] 1996). That story was the lead piece of Twain's first book, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches*. While his countrymen delighted in what one American reviewer called the book's "quaint humor" and "pithy wisdom", an early French reader, Thérèse Bentzon, wrote that the humor – particularly "what the Americans call *slang*" – was "quite difficult for us to understand" (BENTZON 1872 [trans., Greg Robinson] in FISHKIN 2010c: 28; 25).

If European readers found the dialect and slang of Twain's first book hard to penetrate, the insults he hurled at them in his second book were downright insufferable (TWAIN [1869] 1996). The idea that the author of *The Innocents Abroad* would one day be the toast of Europe probably seemed even more preposterous than the idea that the author of "The Jumping Frog" would one day get an honorary degree from Oxford.

In 1907, Twain's close friend William Dean Howells referred to "Mark Twain, originally of Missouri, but then provisionally of Hartford, and now ultimately of the Solar System, not to say the Universe" (HOWELLS 1907: 601). How did the "wild humorist of the Pacific slope" (as he was known in his early career) become a writer embraced with affection on six continents? How did he become an author whose work would be translated into scores of languages and published in virtually every country with a publishing industry? How did a child reared in a provincial town in Missouri come to think of himself – and come to be thought of by others – not as a citizen of Missouri, or Connecticut or even of the United States, but of the world? These are some questions this essay will address.

The *Innocents Abroad*, the record of a trip Twain took to Europe in the company of a group of middle-class, middle-brow fellow Americans, was, in the opinion of the German novelist, critic, and philologist Eduard Engel "a thoroughly irritating book" (ENGEL 1880 [trans., Valerie Bopp] in FISHKIN 2010c: 33). It was not written for readers like him. It was written for readers back home, designed to help armchair travelers see Europe and the Holy Land as they might have seen it with their own eyes. It was designed to let his countrymen see Europe at his side, learning something along the way, but not in a manner that constantly reminded them of how new their own country was and how lacking in all the conventional trappings of civilization. *The Innocents Abroad* was designed to let

¹ Title quotation after William Dean Howells (HOWELLS 1907: 601). Portions of this essay draw on FISHKIN, "American Literature in Transnational Perspective" (2015), and FISHKIN, "Transnational Mark Twain" (2016).